

PART FOUR: WHEN I MEET A PERSON

People have often asked me how I look at people and what I see when I look. Many times what I think people are really asking is what kind of beliefs I have about people. I will try to answer this in a way that I think might help people understand more about some of the things that I do when I'm working with people. I will treat this in an extemporaneous fashion, trying to put together what I do as thoughts occur to me. I am quite aware that many of the ways I feel and things I do may not be all that's there, but I will share with you the best that I know at this point.

I would like to start with what goes on in me when I think about using myself as a helper to another person. In the first place, the person and his family—because I almost always think in the family context—would not be coming to me unless they had some kind of pain or some kind of problem that they wanted to solve. In some way I feel them as having said to themselves (or having been told by someone else), "We've reached the end of our ability to cope, and we are searching for

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some way to cope better.” People don’t always put it in that language. Sometimes they only say, “I hurt” or “Somebody is doing something wrong.” I hear it as a search for a new ability to cope better with their lives, and to have more joy and pleasure, less pain, and perhaps more productivity.

I see all people as representations of life, in whatever form that happens to be. When people are in need or are having some kind of problem, their manifestation of themselves—the way they look and sound and talk—can be pretty ugly, pretty beautiful, or pretty painful. Underneath all this I see the living human who, I feel, would use himself or herself differently if he or she were in touch with the life that he or she is and has. So with every human being that I encounter, I mentally take off his or her outside and try to see the inside, which is that piece of the self that I call self-worth or self-esteem, and to which I have given the affectionate name “pot.” This “pot” is searching for some way of manifesting itself, and I meet a person with that awareness. There is in the person that which, probably he or she has not touched. That person not only hasn’t touched it—he or she doesn’t even know it’s there. I know it’s there. This conviction in me is so strong that it is a given for me. I never ask *if* that person has life; I ask only how it can be touched.

Yesterday I did an interview with a family which is fresh in my mind at the moment. What I am going to try to do is describe in the best way I can what happened between the family and me. I’ll supply my understanding of what was going on in me, and how I used that understanding to reach the self-worth of each member of the family. This family had an adult male and an adult female who were husband and wife. These two adults were also father and mother of five children, the oldest eighteen and the youngest five. Of course, they had some kind of problem or they wouldn’t have come in for treatment. That part was also obvious.

To start off, I was not so much concerned with a particular problem as with trying to understand and learn about how each person in this family lived his or her life, both with the others and with himself or herself. For me, there are always two lives going on all the time—mine with myself, and mine with the other people who are significant to me. When I met this family, I didn’t know what I was going to find. I did not know how these particular family members were going to manifest themselves; I only knew that they were hurting and that they had something in them that could be touched and developed and that could grow.

The first thing I did was to meet each one. Something that I am quite aware of is that people aren't usually related to themselves as people of worth. I feel that no changes can be made in people unless they begin to feel themselves as having worth, and that I as the therapist become the first means by which a person comes in touch with his or her own feeling of worth. My meeting with this family was the beginning of this. I extended my hand to the husband-father, and subsequently did the same with all the rest of the family.

I would like to say a little bit about what it was like for me when I did that. In the first place—and you might think along with me—suppose you are someone I am just meeting. You are with a group of people, perhaps members of your family, and I stand in front of you and reach out my hand to you at arm level. As I reach for your hand and you give it to me, I feel a connection. At that moment in time, I am looking at you; I am in touch with your skin feelings and my skin feelings and for that moment there is no one else in the world except you and me. You are the receiver of my full attention at that moment. You can feel that what I am connecting with is your personhood, and I feel that I am giving mine to you. A smile accompanies this, and my smile is saying “hello” to you and to your life as a representation of all life. This kind of experience makes it possible for me to feel that I am connected with another form of life, another manifestation of life—yours. I regard life manifestation as the basis of what personhood is all about.

As I do this with each member of your family, I am also aware within myself that I am enjoying having the contact—full contact—which in some way also affirms me. I am a living being connected with another living being. It is like the platform or the base from which we are going to go. This is why I do not start out my treatment session with a discussion of the problem, but rather make this basic connection on a human level with everyone. Of course, people are coming in for some help; if they knew what sort of help they needed, they would probably be doing it themselves and not seeking me. They have come to the end of their coping and they want some help, but probably all that they are aware of is that they have pain.

As I am making this first contact with them, I am listening to their responses to me. In a few moments, I will hear responses from the people to each another. I begin to get a feeling for what they have done, how they have used their experiences from the time they popped out of the womb until now. Some of you may be familiar with the stances I use for shorthand purposes—the ways in which people communicate

with one another, the responses I have labeled as *placating*, *blaming*, *super-reasonable*, *irrelevant*, and *flow*. At the beginning of treatment I do not expect the family to display many flow responses, because the fact that they haven't arrived at that point is probably one of the reasons they are coping in the way that they are. I also want to underscore the fact that I see the people in front of me as doing the very best they can with what they have learned; and I believe that what they have learned represents the best way they know how to survive. Some of you may be aware that I have translated the various kinds of responses into body positions. Within a few moments, I am making mental pictures of the people in front of me and translating them into physical postures that represent their ways of communicating.

For example, in the family I saw yesterday, I saw the man as making super-reasonable responses. That meant that in my imagination he was standing there very erect, with very little movement, speaking in a rather monotonous way. I saw the woman kneeling before him in a placating position, but at the same time—behind her back—pointing an accusing finger at him. I saw the oldest daughter standing and super-reasonable like her father, looking at neither parent but with one finger barely poking out, pointing at her father. I saw the next girl very deliberately and in a very obvious way pointing her finger at her mother. The next child was a boy. I saw him standing very close to his mother and placating her. Then I saw the next child as giving out irrelevant responses by moving all over the place and not being able to fix on anyone. I also saw the youngest child, a five-year-old girl, as being irrelevant.

As I saw these pictures in my mind, it was important to respect them as representing the best ways that these people had developed to cope. Their ways of placating, blaming, and being super-reasonable or irrelevant had formed a system which meant that no one in the family could really approach the personhood of another. They were likely to mishear one another; they were seeing roles rather than real people. So my search and my efforts would be directed to helping these people to become real with one another. I looked at this family, and my insides felt them respond to my contact. Full contact, by the way, carries the message of caring—caring in a deep, personal sense—and I regard that contact as a vital basis for developing any changes. There has to be high trust. If people in the family group do not find me trustworthy, I don't think we are going to be able to effect any changes.

I remember that as I entered the room yesterday, the family was spread around on chairs, looking very much like

targets on a rifle range. A table was in front of them. As I looked at this scene, I felt that it would be very awkward to work in this context. I feel very strongly that where people are sitting (far apart or close together) and the way they are sitting is very important. I need to make the place where I work comfortable—that is, to arrange it so that I can see everybody. I place myself within arm's length of each person. There must be enough space for me and the other people to move about. This space is necessary because sometimes I will have family members work in pairs, or I will do “sculpturing” or some other kind of activity that requires space. A table or other obstacle makes movement difficult. Yesterday, I moved the table and fixed it so that I was no more than a small step away from making touch contact with everyone in the group.

The little five-year-old was on my right. At one point I noticed that she was moving back a little bit. By this time I had the feeling that she was regarded as the troublemaker in the family and was rather on the outside. I slipped my hand around her back—she had a nice, round back—and I found myself feeling the enjoyment of touching her. I think she felt this as a message of encouragement to be a part of the group. Throughout the interview there was much more of this.

One can touch in all kinds of ways. In training therapists, I have told them that to develop “eyes and ears” in their fingers is important. People in families are touching all the time—slapping, pushing, shoving, holding. I'm sure all of you know that touches have different meanings. So it isn't a matter of giving a touch; it's a matter of the message in the touch. I referred earlier to developing trust. That means that the atmosphere, through trust, has to be such that people can begin to talk about what I call “unspeakable things”—the things that are close to their hearts—what they worry about, what they fear, and what they hope for. I don't know if I can state this strongly enough. To me, that people *do* say what was once unspeakable is much more important than *what* they say. Sometimes it takes a little while for people to get the feeling that whatever they say can be heard and understood. It does not have to be run through any censorship system about what is right. I don't know of any way to help a person get to himself or herself unless that person can let out whatever is there. That is not a usual thing in this society, as many of you doubtlessly know. But to create the context and the working way for change to take place, it seems to me that no one can be penalized in any way for what he or she says—at least not by me. Instead, I must take whatever someone says and make this a living account of where the person is at that moment. What that person says must be

understood by him or her as well as by everyone else. This means that a great deal of clarifying must go on so that a family can understand what each member is really trying to say.

As yesterday's interview proceeded, I put a question to each person in the family: "What do you hope will happen to you as a result of your coming here?" I suppose the usual question a therapist might ask is, "What is the problem?" I *am* interested in finding out where people are locked in, but I also feel that my way of asking about this and what I ask helps the person to center more on himself or herself. It also goes a little way toward diminishing the negative "vibes" that are usually there—usually in some form of "Well, if he or she were better, I would be better," or something of that sort.

In this instance I started out with the oldest daughter. At this moment I don't know why I did, except that at the time it seemed to be the right place to start. She said that she would like to see the family "not fight so much." I went on to her sister, who said the same thing. I asked other family members if they had noticed that there was a lot of fighting going on. Everyone acknowledged this. The next picture that emerged in my mind was of the two older girls fighting with one another. It seemed at that point that they were the focus around which the family's problems centered. The argument was that if these two girls didn't fight, then the family would be better. What this introduced was how the people in this family would be comfortable about expressing their anger. When I put my question to the father, his answer was that his family needed to be educated on things they had previously not known.

Because I like to make an "alive" picture as quickly as possible, it seemed natural at that point to ask the two older girls to get up and point their fingers at each other in order to see what other family members did when this happened. I find that words are more useful when there is a picture; I call this "sculpturing" or "posturing." I found that when I asked the two girls to point at each other, they were very reluctant to do so. They talked about how they fought, but actually putting themselves in the position of doing it made it more real. They seemed embarrassed.

One of the important things that I try to do is help people to be free (I am using "free" in the sense of having options and choices). I encourage people to start playing with new ideas about their behavior. I give them support to break through their taboos. Since the two girls were embarrassed, I stood behind the girl who seemed most embarrassed and

supported her, standing close to her back and taking her arm and helping it to go out in a pointing direction. Then I did the same thing for the other girl. I was essentially taking the first step toward breaking this family's rule that you shouldn't be angry. This then led to the matter of what the others in the family do when there is fighting. Here were the two girls standing and pointing at each other, and everyone in the family had seen this before. My next question to the husband-father was, "What do you do when this happens?" He said he tried to tell the girls to stop, but it didn't do any good. I had him come up with his finger pointing and when he saw that this did no good either, he dropped his arm and sat down. One of the girls said the wife-mother "came on a little stronger," so I had her come in with her finger pointing. I asked some of the other children what usually happened. They said they tried to stay out of it. The oldest boy now went to his mother's side, so he came in like an auxiliary father, trying to help her with the problem between the two girls.

This kind of sculpturing has value because it makes explicit what is going on. It also brings the present (but not acknowledged) family process picture to life. This picture is not to show how bad people are, but to help them see what is going on. There is oftentimes a good bit of humor in this. I remember at one point asking the oldest girl to put out her finger. Her hand was a little wobbly, so I supported it and asked her to make believe there really was a pistol at the end of her hand. Lighthearted things like this tend to help neutralize the negative self-worth effect and to increase the ability of the person to look and see. For me, it is very important to make the separation between the person, his or her values, and how he or she is using himself or herself. I am bringing people in touch with the various ways they use themselves as well as with how they can use themselves differently. I do this in ways that raise their feelings of self-worth.

People often ask me if I feel drained after an interview. My answer is "No." I *would* get drained if I kept asking myself all kinds of questions like "Am I doing it right? Will people love me? Am I going to come out with a cure?" If I started to do that (which I call "potting myself"), I would lose track of the system and process that are going on and I would be on *my* story rather than the story of the family.

This leads me now to something else. I consider myself the leader of the *process* in the interview but *not* the leader of the *people*. I check out everything I do with them before I do it. I am a strong leader for the process. This is based on the fact

that I am the one who knows what the process I am trying to produce is all about. I want to help people to become their own designers of their own choice-making; before they can do that, they need to be free to take risks. My checking out with them their willingness to undertake something new is a very important piece of this interaction and alerts them to the experience of taking risks. If I have something to offer you, I need to tell you about it; I need to show you; I need to ask you if what I offer has any value to you. What is important is that if I am introducing something new to you and I ask you too soon if you are willing to do it—that is, before I have gotten your understanding, trust, and willingness to take risks—then you will not be in a place where you feel that you can take a chance.

People often say to me, “Well, what if something you do backfires?” I answer, “That’s not unusual.” It is what happens in life when you try something that doesn’t work. You have some choices after that. You can call yourself bad names for trying it out, or you can use it as a life experience and learn from it. Nothing backfired in yesterday’s interview because it seemed that I was in the flow and had nice things going. That is the whole point. As a therapist, I try to be aware of what is happening and keep it flowing rather than try continually to keep score of what is right or wrong.

This might be a good place to say that when I am speaking to a family, I am not trying to solve a specific problem such as should they get a divorce or should they have a baby. I am working to help people find a different kind of coping process. I do not see myself as wise enough to know what is the best thing for a person to do. Should the wife ask her mother-in-law to leave? Should she *demand* that she leave? Should the wife leave her husband if the mother-in-law doesn’t leave? These kinds of questions are not mine to answer. My task is to help each person with his or her own coping so that he or she can decide to do the things that work for him or her.

In yesterday’s family, it came out that the second girl had occasionally talked of committing suicide. A lot of hate responses were going on between her and her mother. Instead of responding to that hate, I read in my insides that these two people wanted very much to get a connection with each other but there were all kinds of barriers between them. I had learned earlier that the wife-mother had viewed this particular child as having the same problems she had had, and was feeling very bad about seeing them in her child. Apparently the mother was trying to solve the problems in herself by trying to solve them in her daughter. This, of course, was why these two could not get together.

I asked the two of them to move toward each other, because by this time the trust level was sufficiently established so that they would be willing to take this risk. First I had them move to where they could see each other clearly, approximately at arm's length, and then I had them look at each other. I then had them close their eyes and I asked each of them to tell me what she saw. This was very interesting. The wife-mother said she saw a little baby whom she hadn't cared for very well, and that she was feeling very guilty. She began to sob a little. When I asked the daughter what she had seen, she said first that she just saw her mother. Then, after her mother had spoken, the girl said, "Well, she always sees me as a baby."

What I was aware of at this point was that these two were not seeing each other as they really were at this point in time; they were seeing each other in terms of past experience. If they didn't change, they would continue to see each other in this way and problems between them would escalate.

One of the criticisms that the daughter had made earlier was that her mother always treated her like a little baby. After this disclosure, I pointed out to the mother that she was indeed seeing this thirteen-year-old as a baby. Then, after asking the mother her age, I pointed out to the daughter that she was seeing a thirty-six-year-old person. I stated that there were these two *ladies* (I used that word), Cynthia and June, who were looking at each other. I wondered out loud if they would see each other as Cynthia and June. Then I asked them to look again and tell me, after shutting their eyes, what they saw.

They were being what I call "brought up to date." As June (the mother) spoke, she said she saw this thirteen-year-old who was attractive and that it was a whole new awareness for her. The daughter said she saw her mother and the look in her eyes, which seemed to be a look of caring for her and which she liked. Both of them at that point said they felt a whole lot different about one another.

The family then moved on to another situation involving the older daughter and her father. She was almost eighteen, and her father was still insisting that she come home early. It turned out that this man, because of his psychological and physical problems, had not yet come to a place where he could see himself as supporting his family by his work alone. His wife was working from 2:30 in the afternoon until midnight or so, which meant that the bulk of the management of the family was in the hands of the husband. He had worked out with the older daughter that she cooked dinner. Apparently she did the shopping, too. He demanded that she come home early, which she felt was an affront—a kind of invasion.

I asked these two to sit in front of one another and just try to hear one another. I guided their listening and helped them to see that they were not talking to each other in terms of what the other was saying but only in terms of how each wanted to control the other. After this, it seemed as though both the daughter and her father had come to a new understanding.

It was quite clear at this point that both the husband and wife were very fearful about what would happen to their children. Another piece of information that came out was that both of them had parents who had left them early. They were both brought up by grandparents who apparently were very anxious about them. This anxiety was transferred. Without this being clear before, most of the children in the family heard the parents' efforts to care for them as something against them. They had not been in touch with this other part. At the same time, the parents had been hearing their children as being quarrelsome and unappreciative. We were able to make some new connections.

Throughout the interview, my mental picture was one of content flowing out and connections being made. Using myself in a very active way, I could pick out times (as with the mother and daughter) to make a new connection. During the flow of touching in the family, the mother said that she hoped that her youngest son would hug her. When he came home, he only gave her a "little old hug" and she always felt cheated. The whole question of affection in the family and how people could be affectionate was brought up. This had had a taboo on it. At the end of the interview—because I was enjoying the family and feeling affectionate feelings toward them—it was natural for me to hug the members of the family. Just after I hugged the mother and went to the two sisters, I heard a little snickering by the two boys, aged eighteen and twelve. What crossed my mind was that these two boys were at a period where it might be awkward for them to engage in this kind of thing even though I felt they wanted some kind of expression of affection from me. When I turned to the first of them, I commented that I had heard the snickering and that maybe this was a bit much for them, but I wanted them to know that I had these feelings. Then I gave them each an extra-warm handshake and a pat on the shoulder, trying to respect where they were at that point and at the same time to convey my message. What was interesting also was that the father was the last one I went to; I had the feeling that he was almost standing in line waiting and would be willing to hug but couldn't quite ask. When I made the overture to him, he came readily to be hugged. I know that men very

often have had experiences in the past where it wasn't manly to have such feelings, and so I found myself telling the father that Bob Hope had spoken so many years ago about an individual who "had not been cuddled and so he curdled." This helped the father to put an acceptable face on this display of affection.

The observers watching the family yesterday could see life begin to be much more evident in these people. I am aware right now that when I think about my treatment sessions, I think of them as experiences in human contact which for me—without being in any sense mystical—create a feeling that I have had a journey and an adventure with other live beings. I hope that as a result of our journey, the people are feeling more alive, more lovable, more hopeful, more creative, and are seeing new ways to use themselves and to connect with each other. Often, I see people only one time. My hope is that every interview will result in a new window for each person to look through with the result of feeling better about himself or herself and gaining the ability to do things more creatively with other members of his or her family. This is really what I mean by saying that I am dealing with a coping process rather than a problem-solving process.

I would like to return to my use of the communication stances as aids to developing changes in the coping process. I mentioned the four stances which I expect to see in some combination with all of the people who are experiencing problems in coping. Placating, blaming, being super-reasonable, and being irrelevant all appeared in yesterday's family. Incidentally, one of the things I have become increasingly conscious of is that the American dream about what a person should be really fits my category of the super-reasonable response. This response is: "For goodness sake, don't show any feeling!" This to me is sad, but it is also true.

At this point I will digress a moment and state that the stances are not rigid and unchangeable. Each of these ways of communicating can be "renovated." If you are handling your responses by placating, one of the ravages going on within you is that you keep giving yourself messages that you don't count for very much. However, if you know how, you can renovate this ability to be tender and bring it into your awareness instead of just feeling an automatic given that you always have to please everyone.

Renovated blaming becomes your ability to stand up for yourself. Everyone needs to be able to do that, but you must do it realistically and consciously rather than automatically.

Renovated super-reasonableness becomes the creative use of your intelligence. Using your intelligence is delightful; but if it is used only to protect yourself, it becomes rather boring and unfulfilling.

Renovated irrelevancy becomes your ability to be spontaneous and to give yourself a new direction in awareness and in reality.

In any case, in dealing with a super-reasonable person—like the father in yesterday's family—the therapist faces a most difficult problem. Super-reasonable people sit very still and upright; they move their faces very little, their voices are usually in a monotone, and they always talk very reasonably. You get this feeling of a kind of drying-up about the person; he or she is all locked in. As it happened, the father had been a Fundamentalist minister, and he had strong feelings about what was right and wrong. I noticed that he responded to all my overtures—the handshake, the questions, and the statements I made—in the same way. I felt that he listened, but I wasn't always sure he understood. I did find—and continue to find—that people who organize their responses in this fashion use lots of words to say things. It is important for me to try to tune in wherever I can in a way that is going to touch the person. And so when someone is organized by using big words and being reasonable, it is natural for me to come in on that level. Oftentimes therapists get bored by people who talk a lot. However, I need to have them talk enough so that I can understand what they are saying on the meta level. In the case of this man, he had told me about his repeated efforts to do what he wanted to do and how they continued to fail. Again, this was said in his dry, rather matter-of-fact voice. As I listened to him, I became aware that it sounded as though he had stopped trying. I asked him what had happened to his dreams. It sounded a little to me as if he had given up on his dreams. I began to see a light come into his eyes. The bottom half of his face didn't change particularly, but his eyes became a little wider and there was a little light in them. As I listened to his response, he said it was true that he didn't have any more dreams. They were dead.

In my mind, I now pictured him in a sculpture—a lifeless inner body with an outer hard shell. I use these stances and ways of communicating that I hear and see in my mind as my guidelines to the kinds of interventions I make with people. If this is done in a trusting, understanding, hearing context, then new understandings emerge. By the end of yesterday's interview, the husband's whole face was beginning to respond, not just his eyes.

I might say here—I think it is true of me and of others, too—that when I am listening to somebody, I am also looking at him or her and am aware of all his or her moving parts. I am aware of all the changes that may be going on. I am listening with my full self, with all of my senses.

There is an important element that I would like to mention. I call it the “energy field.” I think it is important because it goes along with touching. Around any well-integrated person there is a circular field that is about three feet in diameter. At the edge of this field, you can feel vibrations—at least *I* can! These vibrations are like unacknowledged territorial lines around the person. When a person is relatively well put-together, those lines feel like elastic. If you come up to them, first of all you can physically feel them; you can feel that you are bumping against something. If it feels elastic, you know that you are there and that maybe you can reach over. I respect these lines. That’s why I stay at arm’s length. If I go closer to a person, I have already experimented as to whether or not his or her boundary will let me in. There seems to be a relation between the development of trust and the elasticity of this boundary.

When I am dealing with people who are very, very much out of contact with themselves, their energy field is only about two or three inches in diameter. I have to go a long way before I can feel any kind of vibration at all. It is a kind of deadness. I am virtually face to face with them before I get any kind of feeling of presence at all. When people have very violent insides, their field extends to about six feet and I am very aware of that. We tend to overuse the word *vibrations*; but I know what that feels like, and I am very respectful of that boundary. It is imaginary, but I can feel it in my body. When I’m around people in whom there is a lot of violence, I never go close until I can begin to feel the elasticity. I don’t know if I am explaining this suitably, but it is a little like using your body to determine how far you can go. This is very relevant to the whole touching business because my touching doesn’t take place unless I know that the other person’s boundary is elastic.

Sight is also a part of this. The distance at which you can see someone—*really* see him—is probably nine or ten feet. At ten feet the outlines are there; the nuances are not there. You can see fairly well at six feet; at about three feet you can see much better. I want to get where I can be seen and heard as soon as I can. The process of going close is many times also the process of connecting—the slow way. You can’t judge this by what you *should* do; you have to judge it by the way you feel. Some people who watched me work with a family and saw me

touch said, “Aha! I see! All you have to do is touch.” My answer was that touch has to be used just as carefully with people as with a hot stove. You are quite literally feeling your way. This is one of the reasons that when I work with therapists and train them, I try to train their body awareness. For example, when people get into murderous rages, it helps me to be in a position of helping but yet not crowding. I don’t think the touch connection works in that kind of situation. Perhaps some of you have noticed that when someone is in a rage and you touch him or her, you might get hit. The hit is not because the person wants to kill you (although he or she could) but because at that time the boundaries have been violated.

I wondered then about the other members of yesterday’s families and their dreams. For a few moments we talked about dreams that had not come to life. The wife’s dream was of being able to have a life with her husband different from the one she had. She said she had started her marriage by always trying to please her husband. That had been what she was taught to do. She was now tired of it. I asked her if she would be willing to make a little picture with me. She agreed. I asked her to get down on her knees and to look up at her husband, whom I asked to stand on a stool. Then I asked the wife if what she was doing felt like anything she had ever felt before. She said that it did but she didn’t want it to be like that anymore. Then I asked her husband how he felt up there, and he said he didn’t like her being down there and he didn’t like being on top. Then I asked them to fix it so they would both be comfortable. Of course, they ended up being eye-to-eye, both on the same level. It was following this that some expressions of hope began to appear on their faces.

What I want to emphasize here is that if I hear a person handling his or her responses in a super-reasonable fashion, I tune in at the level of the intellect but in such a way as to give the person an experience of really being heard and seen. If I shift to a person who—like yesterday’s wife—is placating, I try to get in touch with what she hoped for herself and lead her to talk about some of her yearnings and loneliness. The wife did this, but it wouldn’t have appeared unless I had asked.

With blamers—like the second oldest child—I have to get in touch with the longing to be connected. This was my approach yesterday when, rather than dealing with all the hate feelings, we focused instead on her own feelings about herself and her wish to be connected with her mother. What I found myself doing in each case was trying to help the person stabilize. Sometimes I did this with a touch of my hand, or

perhaps just by getting the person to be physically still for a moment in order to focus.

This is important to share with you because as I sit with a family, my body tells me a great deal about where those people are and where their boundaries are. For example, the boundary is very, very close around a super-reasonable person. This is probably one of the reasons people say that the super-reasonable person is not “available.” The boundary around an irrelevant person is all broken; you can’t tell where it is. The boundary around a blamer is very far out and jagged. The placater is a very interesting person. His boundary is made out of liquid—out of whipped cream that is beginning to melt. It is there, but you can’t tell much from it. Even though this is a somewhat picturesque way of talking about a person and his presence, it is something of which I am very aware, and I honor it. Perhaps a poetic way of putting it is this: What you are feeling at any point in time is how much of a person’s life is willing to make itself known, with what fear, with what protectiveness. If you want to connect with that, you must be able to respect it.

My hands are my most valuable treatment asset. Also my body and my skin, in sensing what is going on; and my eyes in seeing; and the connections that all of these make. Hands are so important! This is one of the reasons I try to help people to educate their hands. Something else I do in affectional relationships with people is to help them to educate their bodies and also to be aware of space and boundaries. I am quite convinced that that’s what this business of making connections really means. What I have just said helps me make a definition of *intimacy*. It is simply the freedom to respect the spaces between people—to go in when there is an invitation, and not to invade when there isn’t one. That is real intimacy.

People often ask me, “How long is an interview?” It is as long as is necessary to make it possible to find and open a new window for people to look through. An interview can last anywhere from two to three hours. I am not doing office practice any more; when I was, I had three hours as my minimum time for an initial interview. I wanted people to leave the interview with something new that they could experiment with and live with. This means they go out of my office with a new awareness that they can use. It can be small or big, but that awareness carries with it some kind of hope—the hope that they can do something different about themselves, that life can be different for them in some way.

I timed the ensuing sessions to occur whenever another step was readying itself. This pattern is not rigid. My thought is that every interview has a life of its own. Nothing says that I am going to be around tomorrow to see you again or that you are going to be around. I work toward a new possibility and we have a closing on something as the family and I leave each other. That does not mean that all the work is finished. It never means that, because we can go on growing forever. But it does mean that at the end of the interview we have something new that can be useful.

For example, with the family I saw yesterday, the ending for me was my telling them that I enjoyed being with them and being a part of their life for two hours; and that I would have really liked to have been able to continue to be a part, but my life needs didn't make that possible. If by chance we were to meet again, I would like it very much. The idea is that an interview has a life of its own and the next interview will have still another life. Because if you are really growing, each interview will have still another life. Because if you are really growing, each interview is totally different. People are in different places and the therapist is in a different place. At any rate, that is how I like to look at it.

The promise I make to people is that I will tell them everything I can and show them everything I can. I cannot promise that I will tell *all* that is in me because I do not know that. I can tell you only what I know is there. Many of you who are reading may hear things that I never intended but that may be there anyway. My hope for you is that maybe you have found some new windows. Just as I did with the family yesterday, I have tried here to open some doors for you. I hope it will be useful.